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Conservative Intellectuals and the Reagan Ascendancy

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THE DECADES OF THE 1970S AND 1980S will be remembered for, among other things, two apparently related phenomena—a renaissance in the literature of American conservatism in the earlier decade and the presidential administrations of an avowedly conservative political leader in the latter decade. The conjunction of these events invites a number of questions, such as whether the conservative intellectual movement and the “Reagan ascendancy” help us to understand conservative thought in America historically, i.e., whether they assist us in identifying a continuity of ideals and principles. In the 1980s several conservative thinkers disassociated themselves from aspects of Reaganism while conservatives of what I shall label and describe as the “Old Right” expressed profound reservations about what had become known as “neoconservatism.” My thesis, briefly stated, is that whereas the conservative intellectual movement antedated the Reagan ascendancy, Reaganism has brought into focus those aspects of intellectual conservatism that constitute its historic continuity in the United States.

The lexicon of American politics expanded somewhat in the 1970s when socialist Michael Harrington coined the word “neoconservatism.” It found journalistic and academic acceptance, but its use did not obscure certain ambiguities. Neoconservatives were sociologists and economists and wrote for journals like *The Public Interest* that employed the language

and methodology of the modern academic social sciences. Many of them located themselves in policy-oriented “think tanks” like the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. Many were former socialists or liberals. Many were Jewish. What was there in these combinations to constitute an authentic conservatism?

That question, we shall see presently, was precisely the one posed by the Old Right. But it will help us first in addressing that group’s critique to recognize three historic roots of modern conservatism, each a reaction against some phenomenon of modern history. One, best represented by Richard Weaver in his 1948 book *Ideas Have Consequences*, posits a metaphysical conservatism that has resisted the triumph of Nominalism over Realism in Western philosophy. This kind of conservatism stands averse to subsequent expressions of empiricism, utilitarianism, and pragmatism that it believes follow from the demise of a transcendent realm of being as a cognitive reality in human understanding.¹

Second, modern conservatism derives from the opposition to the French Revolution. It is most famously expressed in Edmund Burke’s defense of the traditional order of society against the revolutionary temperament that would destroy it. As further expounded in such Burkean disciples as the American neo-classicist Irving Babbitt, this conservatism invokes tradition and the past as moral and emotional restraints on the dominant whim of the moment and would make of conservatism a certain quality of imagination that is responsive to this appeal.²

But the French Revolution is important in another way. Conservatives from Burke to Robert Nisbet have identified it as a revolution by intellectuals, one in which abstract theory envisioned a new order for human society.³ The inspiration born of a rationalist reconstruction of the world, they believe, set the modern pattern of revolutionary change, one characterized by extraordinary powers allotted to the state and by the militancy of those entrusted to fulfill new blueprints for the redemption of the world. Herein was the conservative mistrust of all secular ideologies, and conjointly its mistrust of human nature. Conservatives have generally warned against the human capacity for evil and have looked to the influence of traditional authorities and institutions, rather than to schemes of amelioration through political reform, to contain or temper it. They describe human life and history as intractable and largely unyielding to the designs of individuals and groups to alter their essential character.

Third, modern conservatism is born of the reaction against the industrial revolution. From Carlyle to Russell Kirk this reaction has, from time to time, given conservatism some peculiar qualities—a romantic medievalism, agrarian sympathies, certain forms of estheticism, a general recoil from the mechanization of life, and even some clear aversions to the

capitalist system associated with the industrial revolution.⁴ It will be noted that the conservatism born of these three sources does not include free-market capitalism itself, identified through the nineteenth century as liberalism.

Those American conservative intellectuals who embraced any of these standards I will call the Old Right. They included traditionalists like Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, Kirk, and Peter Viereck, and religious and metaphysical conservatives like Thomas Molnar, John Hallowell, Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss, and Francis Wilson. Generally this group embraced Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic standards. Kirk, for example, was a convert to Catholicism.⁵

It was the disciples of these conservatives who in the middle 1980s began to speak out very strongly against neoconservatism. In the spring of 1986 the conservative journal *Intercollegiate Review* presented a symposium that brought into focus the accumulating dissents of the Old Right from neoconservatism. The neoconservatives, Gregory Wolfe said, were ad hoc conservatives, a judgment earlier made by historian Paul Gottfried; they were issues-oriented, concerned with policy formation, indifferent to large ideas—to what Babbitt called “first principles” and Kirk “permanent things.”⁶ Russell Kirk, in fact, once wrote that “politics is indeed the preoccupation of the quarter-educated.”⁷ Literary scholar George Panichas, now editor of *Modern Age*, a traditionalist conservative journal that Kirk had helped organize in 1957, wrote that “a conservatism that lacks ‘ontological referents’ is as spiritually barren as the liberalism it opposes.”⁸ Also historian Stephen Tonsor, in an earlier essay in *National Review*, identified neoconservatism with cultural modernism, the social and political consequence of which, he said, is totalitarianism.⁹ Generally the Old Right apologists disdained the journalistic style of the neoconservatives and their immersion in sociology, a discipline that Paul Elmer More once referred to as the academic “slums” and whom Kirk quoted in approval on the subject.¹⁰ The worldliness of the neoconservatives also suggested to the Old Right spokesmen a want of principle, a deficiency of underlying intellectual foundations, a precarious pragmatism. Russell Kirk had said of the “pragmatic conservative” that “there is no such animal.”¹¹

In turn, sociologist Peter Berger offered a neoconservative critique of the Old Right. Against the traditionalist and religious conservatives he stated that “we are not able . . . to accept any particular moral tradition, *in toto*, as being the necessary and unquestionable manifestation of divine will, natural law, or reason.” He charged that the traditionalists were waging a fruitless war against modernity, “the modern consciousness” that accepts a value system contingent upon specific historical and social circumstances and that applies a generally pragmatic attitude toward

worldly problems and their solutions.¹²

In 1976 *Commentary* magazine published a symposium titled "What Is a Conservative—Who Is a Liberal?" The several contributors who essayed answers to this question confirmed, as they admitted, that ours is an age of definitional confusion. But few wanted to dispense with labels altogether and tried to make clarifications. In fact, the symposium, drawing widely from across the political spectrum, produced a moderate consensus about these terms. It at least served to indicate what meanings they had taken on among American thinkers in the 1970s.

Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb stated somewhat formulaically what other contributors said.

The liberal tends to be more of an activist because he is more of an optimist; he thinks it is better to do than not to do because he thinks things can and will be made better. . . . He is more of an optimist because he is more of a rationalist; he believes that reason . . . can point the way to the better society . . . and can create a more rational order than the irrationalities of history. . . . He is finally, more of a rationalist because he is more of a secularist . . . he looks to social institutions, above all to the state, for redemption.¹³

Sidney Hook asserted that it is not that liberals have a view of human nature as essentially good and the conservatives as evil. Rather, he said, the liberal tends to derive norms and values from experience and to reject as not authoritative any source that purports to transcend experience. It has been characteristic of conservatives, he added, to derive norms and values either from revelation or from an historical tradition whose authority should be immune from critical reconstruction in the present.¹⁴

What was curiously missing from the symposium was any recollection of the postwar liberalism influenced to a great extent by Reinhold Niebuhr, a liberalism shaped by religion and a religious understanding of human nature and a profound pessimism about it. Also, while the essayists stressed the greater secular character of liberalism, they seldom joined Hook in stressing liberalism's roots in the empiricism of a John Stuart Mill or the pragmatism of a John Dewey. The oversight is perhaps understandable. Most of the contributors wrote with a kind of backward glance to the decade preceding, and the 1960s weighed heavily on their reflections. Liberalism, somehow, had yielded the New Left, or had succumbed to ideological zeal or utopian excess. But Charles Frankel observed that historically liberalism's generally chastened optimism has from time to time taken on millennial secular hopes, projecting a belief that humanity does or must resolve to march forward to an earthly City of God. "This secular idea of progress," Frankel wrote, "sits badly with the empirical and pragmatic traits of liberalism, and it explains, I think, why liberals

repeatedly break apart into contending groups.”¹⁵

In the 1960s those liberals who rejected redemptive liberalism were being called neoconservatives. But in the 1970s something else was changing. In President Jimmy Carter the Democrats had placed a president who used the language of limitations, at least in the realm of America's material possibilities. A president who cited Reinhold Niebuhr as a major influence on him asked Americans to lower their expectations, to think small. He seemed to be using the conservative language of self-discipline and moderation, even of traditional moral and religious values. Ronald Reagan took political advantage of this new ethic, for he knew what Americans could not accept. And whereas Reagan's career contained many themes, one recurring message was that a new order in Washington, one that would unleash America from the constraints of government, could inaugurate a new era of economic fulfillment. Reagan, as Hugh Heclo wrote, celebrated an American faith in an unimpeded future of economic and technological progress. Whatever there was of conservative ideas of human limitations seemed to be reserved to the public sector. But this message also carried with it a very traditional morality—of family, community, and religion. What Reagan conveyed, Heclo said, was “a kind of space age, high technology version of Norman Rockwell's America.”¹⁶ Likewise, Garry Wills, in his biography of Reagan, found this coupling of economic dynamism with moral nostalgia the essence of Reagan's career, from his sportscasting days, through his Hollywood sojourn and his salesmanship for General Electric, and into his political ventures. “Hollywood,” wrote Wills, “works at sustaining the illusion that a world totally altered in its technology need not touch or challenge basic beliefs. . . . We are whisked off by Technicolor to Oz, only to make us end up claiming there is no place like the black-and-white farm in Kansas.”¹⁷

The morality notwithstanding, Reagan's was not the language of traditional conservatism. Conservative writer George Will, for one, grew vexed at Reagan's fondness for quoting the words of Tom Paine: “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” Paine's statement, said Will, is the “most unconservative statement that ever issued from human lips,” defiant of what the true conservative knows to be the stubborn givenness of life and the inertia of history.¹⁸ Irving Kristol, in turn, wrote that great expectations are the property of those on the Left, the management of disappointment the expertise of conservatives.¹⁹

I use these comments as a point of transition to my larger subject, the interconnections of the Old Right and neoconservatism. For the purposes of illustration I will use Russell Kirk as spokesman for the older group of conservatives and Irving Kristol for the neoconservatives. Kristol, profes-

sor of Social Thought at New York University and a *Wall Street Journal* editor, has been perhaps the most influential and widely quoted of the neoconservatives. He is indeed the only writer to whom the label neoconservative has been affixed who wholeheartedly accepts it. I would like to use these two intellectuals in briefly addressing what I believe are some important themes in the conservative literature of the last two decades.

First, the statements by Will and Kristol just cited represent a conservative perception that the Reagan rhetoric betrays a quality of secular millennialism that the conservatives have come to associate with the Left. It is a secular millennialism they trace to the French Revolution and to subsequent revolutions in which they find that intellectuals have had an influence. Now a kind of intellectual anti-intellectualism was evident in the Old Right and it has flourished in neoconservatism. Kirk expressed his oneness with Burke in locating the horrors of the French Revolution in "the French attempt to reconstruct society after an abstract pattern." And he expressed more categorically his fear of the person who would try to rule all things by ideas: "When a man is both a professor and an intellectual," Kirk wrote, "he is loathsome; when he is professor and intellectual and ideologist rolled into one he is unbearable."²⁰

Neoconservative animosity to intellectuals has centered on what Jeane Kirkpatrick and the neoconservatives generally have called the "New Class." They have traced the emergence in the United States since World War II of a class of journalists, media professionals, academics, and government bureaucrats. Their complaint is that the New Class made an opening to the countercultural movement of the 1960s and legitimated its anti-bourgeois prejudices. Kristol shared in that complaint, but the New Class also represented to him a phenomenon that lay deeper in Western culture. He was trying to understand not only intellectuals' susceptibility to the appeals of utopian ideas on the Left (and he considered socialism one of these), but also the capacity of Americans in general to be victims of the hopes and promises conveyed in the rhetoric of "Great Society" programs. Kristol tried to place this phenomenon in the larger context of Western culture. Thus, probably Kristol's most important essay, "Christianity, Judaism, and Socialism," was an effort to distinguish between the "orthodox strain" in the two religions and the "gnostic." Kristol invoked traditional conservative distinctions in describing these habits. He differentiated between the orthodox hope for human amelioration through moderate improvement in the routines of daily life and within existing institutions, and the "antinomian" reformism of the gnostic. Kristol referred to Eric Voegelin in his summary, making a neoconservative connection to one of the most influential recent voices of the Old Right.²¹

These prejudices, of course, were related directly to political changes

in the 1960s and 1970s, and to social-cultural factors as well. They emphatically underscore what has struck many as peculiar about neoconservatism—its pronounced populist character, its anti-elitism. Kristol used these terms. He generally adhered to the notion that the liberal agenda in the United States was a New Class program in which the democratic majority of America did not share. Like other neoconservatives, Kristol described new directions in liberalism that had taken it far from its New Deal origins—a concern for creating opportunities for individuals and providing a measure of economic protection for all Americans. The new liberalism, he believed, was denoted by a perverted and abstract egalitarianism and a concern with statistical equality, that was being enforced by the courts and government bureaucracies. It was further denoted, he believed, by an anti-bourgeois ethic derived from the 1960s counterculture.²²

However much conservatives of the Old Right viewed suspiciously the reform of society by intellectual theorizing, they were equally fearful of any facile faith in the wisdom of the masses, itself a factor of revolution. Thus Kirk warned against theories of the General Will in Rousseau, or the Virtue of the Proletariat in Marx, or of the Rational Citizen in Mill. “No mysterious wisdom,” he added, “abides in the bosom of the People to which we can appeal in this hour of our need.”²³ Kirk, like Babbitt and the New Humanists before him, and Burke before them, could only appeal to a higher wisdom and to traditional authorities as correctives of these extremes.

With the neoconservatives, I believe, there is more ambivalence on this question. Kristol at one point said that America had lost the classical and aristocratic notion of “a corrupt people.”²⁴ He quoted Martin Diamond in saying that “The people is usually sensible but seldom wise.”²⁵ And Kristol was moving in the 1980s toward a conviction that if the people were not wise they indeed have a redeeming measure of common sense, a virtue in contrast to the irresponsibility of intellectuals. In fact, he said, ordinary people seemed to be more safe repositories of society’s inherited wisdom than those cultural and intellectual leaders who should be entrusted with its safe-keeping. Kristol came almost to accept a brand of what he called “populist conservatism” when he described it as “an outraged assertion of the validity of received wisdom as against abstract, academic, ‘innovative’ theorizing.”²⁶ But Kristol took seriously the influence of ideas on society and decried the extent of the liberal ideology in the schools and universities and elsewhere. “Our society,” he wrote, “is breeding more and more ‘intellectuals’ and fewer and fewer common men and women.”²⁷ Peter Viereck expressed in 1949 an Old Right view that “democracy works best when it tries to make all its citizens aristocrats.”²⁸

He made this emphasis in working toward a conservative acceptance of democracy while staying aloof from any romantic embrace of mass society, a phenomenon he associated with the totalitarianisms of the Left and the Right. Neoconservatives, I believe, often moved in a populist direction away from this conservative maxim, though Kristol, as we shall see, grasped an Old Right solution in looking for a middle way on another problem.

I would like to add parenthetically that the democratic anti-elitism of the neoconservatives has very identifiable social roots, many connected to the history of the Jewish New York intellectuals, others to the course of politics since World War II.²⁹ Although I will concentrate here only on intellectual connections, I would like to make one point about this subject in relation to Reaganism. The Reagan ideology, especially in terms of what has been called its "Social Agenda," has effected a class and geographical coalition that gives political substance to the democratic anti-elitism of the neoconservatives. That is, the issues of busing and neighborhood schools, school prayer, and abortion, according to Nathan Glazer, divide a less privileged conservative element—particularly "Bible Belt" and lower status Protestants and working and lower middle-class Catholics—against a more privileged liberal one—liberal Protestants and Jews in the cities of the East and West. "These issues," Glazer writes, "have no impact in Ivy League Schools, whose faculty, students, and law professors are generally mystified by the uproar."³⁰ And in another sociological analysis Kevin Phillips has described a populist revolt against "organized knowledge"—that signified by the changes from a manufacturing economy to one based on information and services, a revolt that reflects the same geographical and ethnic patterns of previous populist upheavals.³¹

These two aspects of neoconservatism and their affinity with the Old Right come together in a third, perhaps the most challenging for American conservatism in general. I mentioned early one source of modern conservatism in the revolt against the early industrial revolution and conservatism's long discomfort with the materialistic drives and preoccupations of modern civilization. Kirk's own intellectual biography really begins with his disgust with what he labeled the "assembly-line" civilization that Henry Ford was spreading around the Michigan of Kirk's youth.³² Kirk ever since has expressed an anti-modern alienation from certain aspects of bourgeois America—the triumph of its utilitarian standards over the relics of traditional ways and their continuity with the past.³³ He has pressed a conservative judgment against the barren spiritual landscape and hollow inner life of modern America, "the neat tedium of American middle class life," as he called it, that leaves "no reason for existence

except paltry amusements.”³⁴ And against champions of laissez-faire economics, who have come to share the conservative umbrella with traditionalists, Kirk made clear his dissent. Writing of the influential Austrian economist Ludwig Von Mises, Kirk emphasized that “he does not mention the ugliness, the monotony, the ennui of modern industrial existence.”³⁵

For comparableness of judgments, consider a statement Irving Kristol made in a 1974 interview: “Look,” he said, “I do not think that the United States is an altogether admirable place. . . . I think its society is vulgar, debased, and crassly materialistic. I think the United States has lost its sense of moral purpose and is fast losing its authentic religious values.”³⁶ Kristol and other neoconservatives had broken with their liberal or socialist pasts. They believed that capitalism was the only economic system consistent with human freedom and with economic growth, and Kristol especially had come to appreciate and even to cherish “bourgeois” values—hard work, thrift, frugality, moderation, and self-discipline. But bourgeois values in America lay in virtual ruin, according to Kristol, victim of an unrestrained capitalist ethic. Here, without providing an extended analysis, it should be noted that Daniel Bell’s 1975 book *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, lays very heavily on the neoconservative mind. For at the heart of Kristol’s lament was his conviction that capitalism had become estranged from the moral system that once legitimated it. For capitalism, in its economic successes, had created a climate in which the demands for immediate enjoyment of its fruits proved irresistible. The inner self-discipline that had marked the bourgeois personality had yielded year by year, Kristol said, to a culture, a capitalist culture, that rendered no account of inner restraint and delayed gratifications and gave itself over to an imagination of indefinite material acquisition.³⁷ And as a Contributing Editor to the *Wall Street Journal*, Kristol was always quick to include among the conspirators in this unhappy evolution American business itself. Not only did its amoralism and its libertarian ethic permit it to make indecent profits by packaging and marketing all the nihilistic trappings of the triumphant counterculture, but it was thriving still off the ancient fallacy, derived from Adam Smith, that private vice—the individual’s pursuit of personal gain—will somehow yield public virtue. The toll of our social hedonism and the erosion of our republican morality, said Kristol, put the lie to that notion. As Kirk faulted Von Mises, so did Kristol criticize free-market economist Milton Friedman: “The idea of bourgeois virtue has been eliminated from Friedman’s conception of bourgeois society,” Kristol wrote, “and has been replaced by the ideal of individual liberty.”³⁸

I believe that on this issue, too, the Reagan ascendancy assists in clarification. In 1982 George Gilder published *Wealth and Poverty*, a

book that has been described as the intellectual manifesto of Reaganism. This surprising best-seller reverberated in lyric praise of capitalism, presenting it as a spiritual and moral adventure of inspiring dimensions, "a tempestuous drama, dominated by the incredible activity of entrepreneurs . . . launching enterprise into the always unknown future." Gilder chastised neoconservatives for standing with Marx, Veblen, and Schumpeter in their merely tepid praise of capitalism. (Irving Kristol's book of 1978 was *Two Cheers for Capitalism*).³⁹ In turn, Kristol called *Wealth and Poverty* "three-fourths a great book." But no poet, he said, ever wrote in praise of the profit motive, which is neither noble nor magnanimous. Capitalism promotes some admirable qualities, Kristol said, but they are insufficient for a complete and worthy human life.⁴⁰

As for solutions to the cultural dilemmas of capitalism, Kristol directly echoed the Old Right, albeit with far less confidence and far less intellectual conviction. Neoconservatism here came to its impasse. It did not embrace theism or supernatural faith and gave mostly lip-service to the classical wisdom honored by traditionalist conservatives. But neither could Kristol abandon any of these imperatives. Gilder's book, he said, was ultimately deficient because it lacked "a religious sense."⁴¹ And it was the demise of religion, Kristol wrote, that "haunts bourgeois society." Kristol even cited with approval the warnings of those social critics that had said that bourgeois society was living off the accumulated moral capital of traditional religion and moral philosophy, and that once that capital was depleted, it would find its legitimacy ever more questionable. These were the warnings of the Old Right—Babbitt, Viereck, and Kirk. Kristol was in general concurrence. We have today, he said, "a social order that is sick because it has lost its soul."⁴²

But Kristol's recommendation fell far short of any spiritual testimony or any account of religion's soul-curing effects.⁴³ His recourse to religion was institutional. Religion, he believed, had an indispensable role to play in fostering public discipline, preserving social stability, and acting as a vehicle of moral tradition. True religion, furthermore, had stoical influences. It was a consolation to the soul despairing of the world's injustices and the corrective to the impossible schemes that project a cure to those injustices into the reforming zeal to transform the world.⁴⁴ And finally, Kristol expressed his own intellectual debt to neo-orthodox theologians, mentioning Niebuhr, Tillich, Barth, Maritain, and Buber. "I have read and reread them," he said, "and have no doubt that my neoconservative political orientation indirectly owes much to them." Kristol even suggested that a necessary connection exists "between religious orthodoxy and political conservatism."⁴⁵

I have tried to outline what I believe are some of the important points of continuity in American intellectual conservatism and to suggest how

the Reagan phenomenon in American politics has brought these into focus and highlighted them. But the points of continuity in conservatism have also been its greatest points of tension. Some on the Old Right will see in neoconservatism a populist strand that threatens conservatism's traditional role as a passionate and often eloquent dissent from a leveling democratic culture in which, as Irving Babbitt liked to say, "we descend to meet." They would have a point. On the other hand, the animadversions of the Old Right, as the recent criticism has shown, have too often sought to impose a religious test for conservative membership. But any criterion of theism or metaphysical conformity would exclude from influence some of conservatism's great modern voices—including Irving Babbitt and Peter Viereck. And if the excesses of the New Left should recur, or if the conservatism of the Reagan ascendancy has indeed brought upon us an era of narcissistic materialism and the corporate ethic of the bottom line, then conservatives will have more important battles to wage than these divisive intramural quarrels.

Notes

This paper was delivered at the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians.

1. The consequences for Weaver were not merely intellectual ones. He derived from the defeat of Realism the decline of authority, the erosion of a structured social hierarchy, and the genesis of an overweening confidence in human reason in its quest to perfect the world—the birth, in short, of the modern revolutionary temperament. See Ronald Lora, *Conservative Minds in America* (Chicago, 1971), 180-81.

2. Irving Babbitt's description of the "Moral Imagination" of Burke and the "Idyllic Imagination of Rousseau" in his *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston, 1919) remains one of the most important conservative statements on this subject.

3. On Nisbet, see his *Conservatism* (Minneapolis, 1986), 9, 80-83.

4. Prominent among such critics were the English writers G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, the Southern Agrarians in the United States, and the several contributors to the journal *American Review*, published from 1933 to 1938.

5. See George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since World War II* (New York, 1976), 80.

6. Gregory Wolfe, "Introduction" to "The State of Conservatism: A Symposium," *Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 1986), 3-5; see also Paul Gottfried, "On Neoconservatism," *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review*, 27 (1983), 40-41.

7. Russell Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives* (1952; Chicago, 1962), 56.

8. George Panichas, "Conservatism . . .," in "State of Conservatism," 23.

9. Stephen J. Tonsor, "Why I Too Am Not a Neoconservative," *National Review*, (June 20, 1986), 55.

10. Paul Elmer More, *Aristocracy and Justice*. Shelburne Essays, Ninth Series (1915; New York, 1967), 37; Kirk, *Program for Conservatives*, 73.
11. Kirk, *Program for Conservatives*, 46.
12. Peter Berger, "Our Conservatism and Theirs," *Commentary* (October 1986), 65, 66. Berger in 1986 published *The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions About Prosperity, Equality, and Liberty* (New York, 1986).
13. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Who Is a Conservative—What Is a Liberal? A Symposium," *Commentary* (September 1976), 68.
14. Sidney Hook, "Who Is a Conservative . . . ?" 70.
15. Frankel, "Who Is a Conservative . . . ?" 56.
16. Hugh Heclo, "Reaganism and the Search for a Public Philosophy," in *Perspectives on the Reagan Years*, ed. John L. Palmer (Washington, DC, 1987), 46.
17. Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (New York, 1987), 148.
18. George F. Will, *The New Season: A Spectator's Guide to the 1988 Election* (New York, 1987), 80-81.
19. Irving Kristol, "Reviewing Reagan's Reviewers," *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1985.
20. Kirk, *Program for Conservatives*, 3, 25-26.
21. Kristol's essay is reprinted in his *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead* (New York, 1983). See pp. 320, 317. Eric Voegelin, who died in 1985, was a great influence in the Old Right and a major connection to neoconservatism. His *The New Science of Politics* (1952) and his five-volume work, *Order and History*, explored the subject of gnosticism, "the re-divinization of society," and the quest for "a change in the nature of man and the establishment of a transfigured society." Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 49-50.
22. Irving Kristol, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy," (A Symposium), *Commentary* (April 1978), 54; idem, "A Foolish Americanism, Utopianism," *New York Times Magazine*, November 14, 1971.
23. Kirk, *Program for Conservatives*, 76.
24. Irving Kristol, "Equality," *Commentary* (November 1972), 42.
25. Irving Kristol, "The New Populism: Not to Worry," *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 1985.
26. Irving Kristol, "Whatever Happened to Common Sense?" *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 1984. Kristol also wrote: "To put it simply: the common sense . . . of the American people has been outraged, over the past twenty years, by the persistent unwisdom of their elected and appointed officials." The result was a crisis in democratic institutions, "a crisis of discredited elites." "New Populism," 20.
27. Kristol, "Equality," 42.
28. Peter Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited: What Went Wrong?* (1949; New York, 1962), 34-35. Irving Babbitt wrote: "In the final analysis, the only check to the evils of an unlimited democracy will be found to be in the recognition in some form of the aristocratic principle." *Democracy and Leadership* (Boston, 1924), 61.
29. The Alger Hiss case was critical, setting Jewish intellectuals, most with poor economic backgrounds and former radical political affiliations, against the well-bred and well-connected Hiss and his similarly situated intellectual supporters. See Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York, 1985), 273-74. Alfred Kazin was barely into his memoir *Starting Out in the Thirties* when he wrote: "I had the deepest contempt for those middle-class and doctrinaire radicals, who, after graduating from Harvard or Yale in the Twenties, had made it a matter of personal honor to become Marxists." (1962; New York 1980), 4-5. Kristol has

perpetuated this class sense. In reflecting on his launching of *The Public Interest* with Daniel Bell in 1965, Kristol mentioned that the people who worked with him "had themselves risen from the ranks of the urban poor," and that those who were launching the Great Society programs of the day were "upper-middle class graduates of elite universities who had been dazzled by trendy sociological theories." "Skepticism, Meliorism, and *The Public Interest*," *The Public Interest*, No. 81 (Fall 1985), 33. Add to this that liberalism was taking on an elitist character and a greater skepticism to the populist forces in American life. See Pells, *Liberal Mind*, 25, 154.

30. Nathan Glazer, "The 'Social Agenda,'" in *Perspectives on the Reagan Years*, 7-8. Glazer added: "On one side are the enlightened and the liberal, those who are better educated, concentrated in the professions, oriented toward career, accepting of modern values or practices (divorces, premarital sex, rights for homosexuals and other sexual deviants), more mobile, less committed to stable family life and neighborhood life and traditional values. On the other side are their opposites." P. 8. Perhaps this perspective illustrates Glazer's own connection to neoconservatism.

31. Kevin Phillips, "Who Is a Conservative . . .?" 88. Hugh Heclo writes: "Reaganism contains a populist streak that helps shield it from the conventional attack on conservatives as elitists and isolated from the concerns of ordinary people. It can present itself as conservatism for the little man. Reaganism understands the concerns of people who feel bewildered by the machinations of public bureaucracy and corporate America, who are attached to local concerns and nativistic worries, who distrust the experts and who know a 'traditional value' when they see one without the need for philosophical debate." *Perspectives*, 50.

32. Quoted by Nash, *Conservative Intellectuals*, 69.

33. Kirk: "The current American passion for tumpikes, freeways, and gigantic roadways under other labels is an instance of my meaning. Scarcely a voice is raised in protest when such a project destroys hundreds of farms, demolishes interesting old neighborhoods, parts a rural district forever into halves, or dehumanizes a landscape. Here is the pure Utilitarian mind at work, contemptuous of beauty and social roots." *Program for Conservatives*, 291.

34. *Ibid.*, 107, 147.

35. *Ibid.*, 147. Kirk was especially fond of quoting the Burkean maxim that "to love our country, our country must be lovable." *Ibid.*, 56 and elsewhere in the book.

36. Irving Kristol, Interview with Robert Glasgow, *Psychology Today* (February 7, 1974), 80.

37. Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism* (New York, 1978), 156. Wrote Kristol: "The kind of personality I am describing may be called the bourgeois citizen. He used to exist in large numbers, but now is on the verge of becoming an extinct species. He has been killed off by bourgeois prosperity, which has corrupted his character from that of a citizen to that of a consumer." "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism," *The Public Interest*, No. 31 (Fall 1970), 13.

38. Kristol, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism," 13. Kristol elaborates this theme elsewhere. See *On the Democratic Idea in America* (New York, 1972), 26-29, and *Two Cheers*, 147, 166. His judgments against the spiritual and mortal health of America even made Kristol sympathetic to the New Left. "Today," he wrote in 1967, "the New Left is rushing to fill the spiritual vacuum at the center of our free and capitalist society." Kristol, "What's Bugging the Students?" *Atlantic Monthly*, 110 (May 1967).

39. George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York, 1981), 36-37, 3. Here is Gilder at his warmest, writing about the silicon chip: It is "an infinitesimal marvel that extends the reach of the human brain incomparably further than oil, steel, and machines had multiplied man's muscle in the industrial age." From it came a whole new industry, "thriving in

California's vale of cubistic factories . . . where worlds indeed unfold in grains of sand." 100-1.

40. As reported by Joseph Sobran, "Capitalism and Ecstasy," *National Review* (July 10, 1981), 791. I believe that this concern is at the heart of neoconservatism, the major culture problem it confronts. The Catholic neoconservative Michael Novak wrote: "The commercial values are not, then, sufficient to their own defense. A commercial system needs taming and correction by a moral-cultural system independent of commerce. . . . The founding fathers did not imagine that the institutions of religion, humanism, and the arts would ever lose their indispensable role." *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York, 1982), 121.

41. Irving Kristol, "A New Look at Capitalism," in "George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*: A Symposium," *National Review* (April 17, 1981), 414-15.

42. Kristol, "Equality," 47; idem, *Two Cheers*, 65-66; idem, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism," 15.

43. Kristol called himself "a believer," but said he did not participate in Jewish life "as much as I should." Interview, 202.

44. Ibid., 80; also *Two Cheers*, 253-54.

45. Kristol, "Who Is a Conservative . . .?" 74. Kristol added that "there is unquestionably a connection between religious orthodoxy and political conservatism"—a statement that invited more analysis on his part.